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## Viewing cable 07QUITO175, NEW MINDEF EMPHASIZES SOCIAL MISSION

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### Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

### Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#07QUITO175**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
07QUITO175	2007-01-22 19:56	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Quito

Appears in these articles:

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/06/2014  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [MOPS](#) [SNAR](#) [PTER](#) [EC](#) [CO](#)  
SUBJECT: NEW MINDEF EMPHASIZES SOCIAL MISSION

Classified By: PolOff Jarahn Hillsman, Reasons 1.4 (b&d)

¶1. (C) Summary: In her initial call on Minister of Defense Guadalupe Larriva on January 18, the Ambassador expressed USG willingness to deepen security cooperation, and highlighted successful U.S. led development projects and military humanitarian exercises. Larriva welcomed USG support for civil defense preparedness and other related training. Larriva explained her vision for increasing the Ecuadorian military's social involvement, also lamenting the "disproportionate" affects of Plan Colombia on Ecuador. In a January 19 meeting with the Ambassador, former Defense Minister Oswaldo Jarrin warned of a Chavez-style conversion of the Ecuadorian military, but encouraged USG engagement with the new MinDef in areas of mutual benefit. End Summary.

#### Background

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¶2. (SBU) The Ambassador paid a courtesy call on Defense Minister Guadalupe Larriva on January 18 in her office. She was accompanied by the MILGP Commander and the Defense Attache. Larriva was joined by Ecuadorian Air Force Commander Brigadier General Gabela, representing the Chairman of the Joint Staff, and her military staff planner Colonel Vasquez. The introductory meeting was cordial, with both the Ambassador and Larriva agreeing to continue mutually beneficial cooperation.

#### Larriva: Military to Increase Social Role

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¶3. (C) Larriva told the Ambassador that the Ecuadorian military's new defense agenda will incorporate greater social investments in vulnerable communities - particularly in the Ecuador-Colombia border area. She lamented the region's socioeconomic despair and said that the military, as the only significant GOE entity in many communities, should expand its role. Greater development will help foster security, she affirmed. Larriva said that Ecuador is unjustly suffering the negative affects of Plan Colombia and asked for greater USG support.

¶4. (C) The Ambassador, noting Larriva's concerns, said that USG bilateral assistance programs in Ecuador seek to help Ecuador secure and develop the border region. She explained that through USAID the U.S. had invested tens of millions of dollars in basic infrastructure projects to improve the lives of northern border residents, and would continue such investments. The Ambassador also highlighted successful U.S. military medical readiness exercises and civilian-military training programs.

#### Larriva: There is No Coca in Ecuador!

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¶5. (C) Larriva conveyed strong GOE discontent with Colombia over the resumption of aerial coca eradication within 10 kilometers of the Ecuadorian border. She explained that the spraying was harming residents' health and was causing significant damage to the region's water, soil, and vegetation. Larriva emphatically denied the production of coca in Ecuadorian territory. The Ambassador expressed USG hope that Ecuador and Colombia could reach a practical agreement on the fumigations issue, and noted that while coca production in Ecuador was negligible, the U.S. had, in fact, worked with the GOE on numerous occasions to eradicate coca plantations in Ecuador. "Yes, but they are all gone now," Larriva replied.

#### Larriva: Civil Defense Systems Unprepared

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¶6. (C) Larriva admitted Ecuador's disaster relief preparedness was "poor," and said she would move to increase prevention and response training. The MILGP Commander noted U.S. military assistance programs, both in the areas of response and preparedness/mitigation, and offered to continue work with the GOE. Larriva was very receptive to the idea,

agreeing to discuss it further at a later date.

Jarrin: The Venezuelans are Coming!

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¶7. (C) The Ambassador met with former MinDef Oswaldo Jarrin at her residence on January 19 to learn his views on Larriva, new military appointments, and avenues for continued security cooperation. Jarrin remains close to current military leaders, providing well-informed insight on the institution.

¶8. (C) Jarrin warned the Ambassador of what he called a "Venezuelan-style takeover" of the military by President Correa. Jarrin said that the Ecuadorian military would likely soon be inundated by Venezuelan and Cuban officers, likely at the brigade level. He noted that Larriva's choice for chief of defense, General Hector Hugo Camacho Pauta, has a well-known record of disregard for ethics, which Correa could easily manipulate to control Camacho's actions. Jarrin advised the Ambassador to listen closely to the Correa administration's rhetoric, adding that when Larriva speaks of a greater "social role" for the military she is inappropriately advocating military support for Correa's domestic political agenda, including the proposed national constituent assembly.

¶9. (C) Jarrin expressed dismay over what he characterized as the "lies" by the new government about the non-existence of coca production in Ecuador. He highlighted improvement in cross-border communication under his leadership, noting the reduction in Colombian military incursion flare-ups in late ¶2006. The relationship with Colombia is broader and more important than just aerial fumigations, he said, differing with the Correa government's current fixation on the issue of spraying. Far worse health and environmental damage is caused by the chemical byproducts of coca processing in the region, he affirmed.

¶10. (C) Jarrin also shared the reason why he resigned from the Palacio government, a matter of much speculation here. After a series of disagreements with President Palacio, Jarrin finally resigned over a dispute with Palacio over how to handle the Puerto Nuevo mortar incident in August 2006, in which an errant GOC grenade injured three civilians in the Ecuadorian border community. Jarrin said he was ordered by President Palacio to downplay the incident, to prevent strained relations with Colombia (and thereby maximize Palacio's chances of winning the Director Generalship of the World Health Organization that he was seeking at that time, Jarrin suspects). Jarrin refused to do so, publicly alleging that the grenade fragments were of Colombian military origin, and then resigned.

Comment

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¶11. (C) Larriva is new to the military establishment and clearly still learning about her portfolio. She clearly hopes to make a mark as the first civilian defense minister by increasing military social outreach and promoting civil defense preparedness, but appears unaware of current efforts, some supported by the USG. Perhaps also as a result of her inexperience, Larriva ironically appears less sensitive than past ministers to restrictions on political involvement by the military. The possible selection of a civilian vice minister (rumored to be her colleague in the Socialist party and former member of Congress Rafael Quintero), will not add any military institutional memory to Larriva's inner circle. Jarrin is a hard-line conservative and prone to alarmist analysis, but his fears of a Chavez-style takeover of the Ecuadorian military and increased Venezuelan and Cuban advisors here are concerns we take seriously and will continue to monitor closely.

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=====CABLE ENDS=====